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MID-ATLANTIC INFORMATION OFFICE: Philadelphia, Pa.

Technical information: (215) 597-3282 BLSInfoPhiladelphia@bls.gov www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic

Media contact: (215) 861-5600 BLSMediaPhiladelphia@bls.gov

Consumer Price Index, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson – April 2020

Area prices decreased 0.1 percent since February; up 0.1 percent over the year

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Baltimore-Columbia-Towson declined 0.1 percent from February to April, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Sheila Watkins noted that the recent two-month decrease was due to a decline in the energy index, down 9.2 percent. The food index rose since February, up 3.7 percent, while the all items less food and energy index was unchanged over the period. (Data in this report are not seasonally adjusted. Accordingly, month-to-month changes may reflect the impact of seasonal influences.)

Over the last 12 months, the CPI-U increased 0.1 percent. The over-the-year rise was due to increases in both the all items less food and energy index (0.8 percent) and the food index (4.5 percent). The energy index dropped over the year, down 16.3 percent. (See [table 1](#).)

Food

The food index advanced 3.7 percent over the last two months, the largest two-month increase in the history of the index. Prices increased for food at home, up 5.5 percent, also the largest two-month increase for this index. Prices for food away from home also rose, up 1.8 percent. Within the food at home component, prices were higher for eggs and bread, while prices were lower for uncooked beef steaks, among others.

Over the year, the food index increased 4.5 percent. Prices rose for both food at home (5.8 percent) and for food away from home (3.2 percent).

Energy

The energy index, which includes prices for household and transportation fuels, decreased 9.2 percent since February, led by lower prices for gasoline (-18.6 percent). Prices for utility (piped) gas service also decreased over the last two months, down 2.8 percent, while those for electricity were up 0.7 percent.

Over the year, the energy index dropped 16.3 percent. Prices were lower for gasoline, down 29.7 percent, and electricity, down 2.8 percent. Prices increased for utility (piped) gas service (8.1 percent) since April 2019.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy was unchanged from February to April. Higher prices for medical care (5.9 percent) and shelter (0.4 percent) were moderated by lower prices for apparel (-10.0 percent) and recreation (-2.3 percent), among others.

The index for all items less food and energy increased 0.8 percent since April 2019, led by higher prices for shelter (1.2 percent), education and communication (5.0 percent), and medical care (2.1 percent). Prices were lower for recreation (-3.0 percent) and new and used motor vehicles (-1.2 percent).

The Consumer Price Index for June 2020 is scheduled to be released Tuesday, July 14, 2020 at 8:30 am (ET).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Impact on April 2020 Consumer Price Index Data

Data collection by personal visit for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) program has been suspended since March 16, 2020. When possible, data normally collected by personal visit were collected either online or by phone. Additionally, data collection in April was affected by the temporary closing or limited operations of certain types of establishments. These factors resulted in an increase in the number of prices considered temporarily unavailable and imputed. While the CPI program attempted to collect as much data as possible, many indexes are based on smaller amounts of collected prices than usual, and a small number of indexes that are normally published were not published this month. Additional information is available at

www.bls.gov/bls/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-bls-price-indexes.htm#CPI.

Technical Note

The Consumer Price Index for Baltimore-Columbia-Towson is published bi-monthly. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change in prices over time in a fixed market basket of goods and services. The Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes CPIs for two population groups: (1) a CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) which covers approximately 93 percent of the total population and (2) a CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) which covers approximately 29 percent of the total population. The CPI-U includes, in addition to wage earners and clerical workers, groups such as professional, managerial, and technical workers, the self-employed, short-term workers, the unemployed, and retirees and others not in the labor force.

The CPI is based on prices of food, clothing, shelter, and fuels, transportation fares, charges for doctors' and dentists' services, drugs, and the other goods and services that people buy for day-to-day living. Each month, prices are collected in 75 urban areas across the country from about 5,000 housing units and approximately 22,000 retail establishments--department stores, supermarkets, hospitals, filling stations, and other types of stores and service establishments. All taxes directly associated with the purchase and use of items are included in the index.











































The index measures price changes from a designated reference date (1982-84) that equals 100.0. An increase of 16.5 percent, for example, is shown as 116.5. This change can also be expressed in dollars as follows: the price of a base period "market basket" of goods and services in the CPI has risen from \$10 in 1982-84 to \$11.65. For further details see the CPI home page on the Internet at www.bls.gov/cpi and the BLS Handbook of Methods, Chapter 17, The Consumer Price Index, available on the Internet at www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/homch17.pdf.

In calculating the index, price changes for the various items in each location are averaged together with weights that represent their importance in the spending of the appropriate population group. Local data are then combined to obtain a U.S. city average. Because the sample size of a local area is smaller, the local area index is subject to substantially more sampling and other measurement error than the national index. In addition, local indexes are not adjusted for seasonal influences. As a result, local area indexes show greater volatility than the national index, although their long-term trends are quite similar. **Note: Area indexes do not measure differences in the level of prices between cities; they only measure the average change in prices for each area since the base period.**

The **Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD, Core Based Statistical Area** includes Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Baltimore City, Carroll, Harford, Howard, and Queen Anne's Counties in Maryland.














Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted)

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020	Apr. 2019	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020
All items.....		259.121		258.978	0.1	-0.1	
Food and beverages		265.763		275.058	4.3	3.5	
Food		265.351		275.084	4.5	3.7	
Food at home		234.132	237.301	247.020	5.8	5.5	4.1
Cereals and bakery products		288.334		299.226	3.4	3.8	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....		232.050		253.261	12.9	9.1	
Dairy and related products		234.638		235.226	2.5	0.3	
Fruits and vegetables		277.825		305.874	6.1	10.1	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		172.116		173.424	-1.5	0.8	
Other food at home		211.114		218.429	5.0	3.5	
Food away from home.....		311.010		316.618	3.2	1.8	
Alcoholic beverages		268.804		271.382	1.2	1.0	
Housing(1).....		262.891		263.447	0.7	0.2	
Shelter		310.636	312.045	311.927	1.2	0.4	0.0
Rent of primary residence		367.044	369.091	368.940	2.1	0.5	0.0
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2).....		326.985	327.802	328.507	2.3	0.5	0.2
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)		326.985	327.802	328.507	2.3	0.5	0.2
Fuels and utilities.....		232.431		231.520	-1.3	-0.4	
Household energy		203.091	202.194	201.874	-2.4	-0.6	-0.2
Energy services.....		217.325	217.206	217.614	-1.8	0.1	0.2
Electricity		203.372	204.730	204.730	-2.8	0.7	0.0
Utility (piped) gas service		194.755	186.953	189.320	8.1	-2.8	1.3
Household furnishings and operations		121.349		120.061	-1.4	-1.1	
Apparel		134.724		121.279	-1.0	-10.0	
Transportation		202.302		192.006	-7.2	-5.1	
Private transportation		198.849		190.970	-6.9	-4.0	
New and used motor vehicles(3).....		96.955		97.507	-1.2	0.6	
New vehicles(1).....		196.453		198.504	-0.9	1.0	
Used cars and trucks(1)		238.809		241.500	-0.6	1.1	
Motor fuel		206.690	197.447	168.480	-29.5	-18.5	-14.7
Gasoline (all types).....		202.110	193.143	164.439	-29.7	-18.6	-14.9
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4).....		203.480	193.730	163.687	-30.8	-19.6	-15.5
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5).....		222.571	217.208	200.449	-20.0	-9.9	-7.7
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4).....		214.962	211.146	188.695	-21.8	-12.2	-10.6
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....		908.685		808.318	-5.7	-11.0	
Medical care		457.298		484.502	2.1	5.9	
Recreation		129.114		126.135	-3.0	-2.3	
Education and communication(3).....		152.048		153.021	5.0	0.6	
Tuition, other school fees, and child care(1)		1,247.158		1,247.199	4.3	0.0	
Other goods and services		430.662					
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		184.087		182.639	-1.8	-0.8	
Commodities less food and beverages		146.962		141.906	-5.4	-3.4	

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted) - Continued

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020	Apr. 2019	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020
Nondurables less food and beverages...		192.356		176.888	-10.2	-8.0	
Durables		101.402		102.212	-0.7	0.8	
Services.....		332.272		333.419	1.1	0.3	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter.....		239.869		239.111	-0.6	-0.3	
All items less medical care		249.250		247.682	-0.1	-0.6	
Commodities less food		150.644		145.711	-5.1	-3.3	
Nondurables		226.153		222.676	-2.4	-1.5	
Nondurables less food.....		196.617		182.136	-9.4	-7.4	
Services less rent of shelter(2).....		369.995		370.937	0.8	0.3	
Services less medical care services.....		320.063		318.615	0.8	-0.5	
Energy(1).....		209.568	204.599	190.368	-16.3	-9.2	-7.0
All items less energy		264.803		266.202	1.3	0.5	
All items less food and energy		264.598		264.702	0.8	0.0	

Footnotes

- (1) Indexes on a March 1978=100 base.
- (2) Indexes on a November 1982=100 base.
- (3) Indexes on a December 1997=100 base.
- (4) Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.
- (5) Indexes on a December 1993=100 base.